

November 17, 2013

Hello,

I would like to introduce myself. I am a dental hygienist who has over 23 years of clinical experience and I live in a state designated dental shortage area. I am responding to a request to let you know of my experiences with local dentists in treating nursing home residents.

I have approached 5 nursing homes to offer my services. In doing so, I have approached 3 dentists to let them know what I was all about. Mainly to create some comradeship between the dentists and myself. These dentists are practicing in the towns of the nursing homes. When asked if I could use them as a referring dentist I was told that they "preferred not to be". The dentist I was previously working for stated, "Do not associate yourself with me. I don't want "those" people in my practice." The reason? Because they are difficult to work on (they take more time=less production) and most are on Medicaid; which is being eliminated from his practice.

There was a common complaint from the Director of Nursing and the Administrators of these nursing homes. The residents that are on Medicaid have two options for getting their dental needs met. Of these two options, for the closest dental clinic, they are traveling the minimum of 80 miles one direction while going thru a town with a dentist. Hard to believe isn't it! It isn't just being on Medicaid, it is also about being elderly. A director of nursing told me of a situation where a resident was in pain for two days. She contacted numerous dentists in the area but none would take him. They traveled 120 miles one way to a dentist who would see him.

I do have to state, that since I've entered the nursing homes; there has been a young dentist that has went to a few nursing homes and did visual exams. Maybe I sparked an interest!

It isn't just the elderly that is having difficulties getting dental services in this area. There are two clinics that Medicaid holders can go to. This can be as far as 80 to 150 miles from this area. Most children are not getting services done because of it. The dentists in this area are not excepting Medicaid! I have watched numerous families turned away! I believe they are telling you they are taking their share, I truly doubt this!

My suggestion, call the nursing homes and see what they have to say. Make sure they understand they will be anonymous! Small town politics is a double end sword!

Sincerely,

A rural hygienist with a passion for serving others.